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ABSTRACT

"Facilitative leadership" may be defined as the ability of principals to lead without controlling, while making it easier for all members of the school community to achieve agreed-upon goals. The bulk of the Bulletin consists of a discussion of 10 propositions related to facilitative leadership drawn from 3 sources: (1) studies in 1991-93 of 9 Oregon schools that were members of the Oregon Network, a federally funded grant designed to enable schools in school restructuring; (2) earlier research conducted with Oregon schools; and (3) observations of other researchers studying the interaction between leadership and restructuring. The propositions are grouped under three broad headings--creating and managing meaning, facilitating the process, and operating in an organizational context. Strengths and limitations of facilitative leadership are illuminated. Also described are the interactions among various organizational and system functions when leadership behaviors change. (Contains 43 references.) (MLF)

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FACILITATIVE LEADERSHIP

HOW PRINCIPALS LEAD WITHOUT DOMINATING

David T. Conley and Paul Goldman

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Preface

In this OSSC Bulletin we explore facilitative leadership, examining the extension and evolution of the concept of principal as instructional leader—emphasizing mastery of multiple technical skills—to the management of the energy flow within a school. We use the term *facilitative leadership* to describe how principals come to lead without dominating.

Contemporary scholars have observed an emerging style of principal leadership characterized by high faculty involvement in and ownership of decisions, management of the school's vision, and an emphasis on significant change and improvement. They have discovered that new terminology is needed to describe the evolution of the principalship in the face of school restructuring, school-based decision-making, and teacher empowerment.

Educational reformers have begun to develop a vision of schools as more fluid, adaptive, and cooperative environments, creating a new set of demands for teachers and principals who must work together for change to occur. We examine in this Bulletin how some principals employ facilitative leadership to achieve this vision, and the tensions that occur when this style of leadership is used.

This Bulletin is based on the chapter "Ten Propositions for Facilitative Leadership," which appeared in Joseph Murphy and Karen Seashore Louis' 1994 book, *Reshaping the Principalship,* published by Corwin Press, Newbury Park, California. The literature review also draws extensively from other chapters in *Reshaping the Principalship.* The reader with an interest in the topic of newly emerging leadership roles, particularly for principals, is encouraged to consult *Reshaping the Principalship* for more discussion and examples of this topic.

About the Authors

David T. Conley is an associate professor of educational policy and management in the College of Education at the University of Oregon. He teaches courses on school restructuring, school improvement, educational leadership, and supervision and evaluation.

Conley contributed to the development and implementation of Oregon's recent landmark school restructuring bill, the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century Act. Currently, he is director of the Proficiency-based Admission Standards System (PASS) Project for the Oregon State System of Higher Education, a groundbreaking redesign of admission standards based on proficiency, not seat time. Conley received his B.A. from University of California, Berkeley, and his master's and doctor's degrees from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Before joining the faculty at the University of Oregon, Conley spent eighteen years serving as a school administrator and teacher in Colorado and California.

Paul Goldman is associate professor of educational policy and management and (by courtesy) Sociology at the University of Oregon. Professor Goldman specializes in the sociology of school organization and the sociology of school reform. His work has been published in *Educational Administration Quarterly, The Journal of Educational Administration, Urban Education, Performance Measurement and Theory, Research in the Sociology of Organizations, The International Yearbook of Organization Studies*, and other journals.

Since 1990, Professor Goldman has been studying policy and organizational implications of school reform in Oregon and in British Columbia. His particular focus has been on studying the impact of site-based management in schools in which restructuring has begun to take hold and codirecting a statewide study of educator reactions to Oregon's Educational Act for the 21st Century. He has been particularly interested in the intersection between special education and educational administration, and currently is studying three schools committed to multiage primary-level instruction and inclusion of special needs learners.

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Introduction: Reconstructing the Role of the Principal

The role of leader and the expectations for those who assume leadership positions are changing as our society changes. Many forces are converging to alter the ways those in positions of power interact with other members of an organization. In the private and public sectors, the roles played by familiar institutions are being questioned.

It is clear that organizations must be able to adapt rapidly to meet the changing needs of their clients as well as to respond to changes in the external environment. Many large, complex organizations have lost this ability. They are focused on their own survival, not driven by a clear set of goals or mission. Large companies such as General Motors, IBM, and Sears have suffered massive financial losses and downscaled dramatically. They are trying to find their niche in a new world economy.

Government, too, has been subjected to change. As increases in real income have slowed and demands for services have accelerated, taxpayers are less willing to pay more when it is often unclear what they are getting for their money. In one state after another, voters have limited the ability of government to raise revenues, thereby putting pressure on government to rethink the way it does business.

Organizational leaders who have been successful in adapting to this changing environment have done so by using several tactics (Peters 1987, Peters and Austin 1985, Peters and Waterman 1982). They have moved decision-making closer to the "front lines." They have listened to their clients or customers and invested in people as a primary resource. These leaders have come to recognize that successful organizations of the future must have a work force that understands organizational goals and can work relatively independently to achieve these goals.

Workers must have a stake in the success, not just the survival, of the

organization. They must be able to make key decisions and to work across traditional lines of authority and hierarchy to solve problems and address customer and client needs. Control is far less important than facilitation; leaders attempt to create and nurture the conditions and structures within which employees can maximize their attainment of goals and objectives that are central to the organization's success.

This reshaping of leadership has clear implications for the principalship. For at least the past seventy years, most schools have functioned as structured bureaucracies, with clear division of labor, specialization, lines of authority, rules, and roles. The principal's role was relatively clear. Principals were charged with maintaining the structure so the "machine" would produce the desired outputs—well-educated students. Schools were not expected to adapt rapidly. In fact their clients—the students—were the ones expected to adapt. Teachers were conditioned to "follow orders," whether in the form of district directives or the district contract. Fulfilling the role requirements (having a lesson plan, keeping the class under control, turning in paperwork as requested, following the district curriculum) was equated with successful teaching. When the desired results were not achieved, the client was generally viewed as the problem.

The movement toward clearly stated standards, whether at the national or state level, is the latest indicator of a shift from emphasizing educational processes to expecting student performance. Longstanding structures of schooling and methods of school management are unlikely to result in the types of improvement that are expected. Increasingly, principals are being held accountable for improved student learning as gauged in relation to standards.

Simultaneously, over the past twenty years teachers have gained considerable power as their average level of education and age have increased. Teachers no longer enter the profession directly out of college, teach several years, leave to raise a family, then return when their children are grown. Most are career professionals. Increasingly, they possess master's degrees, specialized licenses, certificates, and endorsements; many have worked toward doctoral degrees. They are older, more secure, and less susceptible to coercion or threat. They have strong contracts that protect their rights. These teachers function within their classrooms more as "executives" than "workers" (Shedd and Bacharach 1991). They make major decisions regarding the nature and content of schooling.

Murphy and Beck (1994) summarize the convergence of these various forces and their implications for school leaders:

> Principals must find their authority in their personal, interpersonal, and professional competencies, not in formal positions; they must cultivate collegiality, cooperation, and shared commitments among all

> with whom they work. In addition, they must be cognizant of the fact that changes between the school and its environment are imminent. Historically ingrained notions of schools as sheltered monopolies or delivery systems are breaking down under the incursions of a market philosophy into education. Furthermore, the idea that the business of schools is strictly and exclusively academic is crumbling as problems related to poverty, injustice, violence, lack of adequate health care, and the like take center stage in many educational institutions (Crowson and Boyd, 1993). As we move toward the 21st century, principals must be able to forge partnerships and build strategic alliances with parents, with businesses, and with social service agencies. They must lead in efforts to coordinate the energy and work of all stakeholders so that all children in their schools are well served. (p. 15)

How can principals function successfully in environments where accountability expectations are increasing, but where the use of direct authority may not achieve the desired results? In other words, how can principals improve the performance of the system without resorting to mandates or orders? Many managers within and outside of education have found this to be an extremely frustrating dilemma. At the same time, numerous sources indicate that an alternative form of leadership can address these seemingly contradictory conditions. Many names have been given to this form of leadership. We use the term *facilitative leadership* to describe the ability to lead without controlling, while making it easier for everyone in the organization to achieve agreed-upon goals.

Chapter 1

What Is Facilitative Leadership?

The language of facilitative leadership itself is evolving and is both imprecise and difficult to operationalize. We have adapted Dunlap and Goldman's (1991) description of facilitative *power* as a starting point for our definition of facilitative *leadership*, which we define as the behaviors that enhance the collective ability of a school to adapt, solve problems, and improve performance. Facilitative leadership includes behaviors that help the organization achieve shared, negotiated, or complementary goals.

Power and Leadership

The relationship between power and leadership should be carefully considered. Facilitative power assumes the rather free movement of energy within the system; power flows much like electricity in a circuit, or impulses in the nervous system. It is possible to direct the flow, but it is not possible to control it, since there are multiple control points and pathways through which energy might flow. Similarly, it is futile to attempt to control the flow of power within a highly complex system like a school; one individual cannot singlehandedly monitor all the ways in which power affects or modifies behaviors and actions among all the individuals in an organization. Leaders can only hope to understand the flow of power and, where appropriate, direct it in ways that facilitate organizational function and individual efficacy. Once again, this assumes the existence of some ordering force, something that creates some overarching sense of direction or purpose as each individual interacts with the power flow.

Leithwood (1992), citing Ouchi's (1981) work on organizations, suggests there is a shift from Type A toward Type Z organizations. This shift

has given rise to a clearer conceptualization of facilitative power and a greater appreciation of its potential value:

> Type A organizations, very useful for some situations and tasks, centralize control and maintain differences in status between workers and managers and among levels of management; they also rely on top-down decision processes. Such organizations, which include the traditional school, are based on "competitive" (Roberts 1986) or "top-down" (Dunlap and Goldman 1991) power. This is the power to control—to control the selection of new employees, the allocation of resources, and the focus for professional development. One cannot do away with this form of power without losing one's share. It is a zero-sum gain.
>
> In contrast, Type Z organizations rely on strong cultures to influence employees' directions and reduce differences in the status of organizational members. Type Z organizations emphasize participative decision-making as much as possible. They are based on a radically different form of power that is "consensual" and "facilitative" in nature—a form of power manifested *through* other people, not *over* other people. Such power arises, for example, when teachers are helped to find greater meaning in their work, to meet higher-level needs through their work, and to develop enhanced instructional capacities. Facilitative power arises also as school staff members learn how to make the most of their collective capacities in solving school problems. This form of power is unlimited, practically speaking, and substantially enhances the productivity of the school on behalf of its students. While most schools rely on both top-down and facilitative forms of power, finding the right balance is the problem. For schools that are restructuring, moving closer to the facilitative end of the power continuum will usually solve this problem. (p. 9)

Pseudo-Facilitative Leadership

Facilitative leadership is potentially more problematic and contradictory than it may first seem or than its proponents contend. Once an individual identifies herself as the leader, there is a tendency to assume entitlement (duty, obligation) to manipulate the power flow. In environments that are highly transactional, with little overall focus or purpose, the rhetoric of facilitation can be used as a rationalization for subtle manipulation or worse.

Transactional leadership involves recognizing what needs to be done to achieve specific goals or tasks and securing agreements to do so. Such agreements are often achieved by an exchange, tacit or otherwise, between the leader and organizational members of something valued by either or both. The exchange may be intangible (such as recognition or praise) or tangible (resources or desired assignment).

Transactional leadership is important for maintaining organizational functioning and can build trust and enhance motivation. However, the individual organizational members fail to recognize how their behavior contributes to organizational goals; they only view their behavior in relation to the transactions with the leader. Organizational members focus on the leader's "transaction list," the things the leader uses as bargaining chips and the areas where bargaining can occur. This has the effect of fragmenting the organization and stifling the creation of common meaning, purposes, and goals.

There is the potential for leaders to use the language of facilitative leadership in a transactional environment to control certain key elements of the power flow (such as information) in ways that deprive other orgainzational members from influencing and controlling their own work environment and enhancing their efficacy. However, since the trappings of authoritarian leadership are not present, the pseudo-facilitative leader can be much more difficult to detect or to be held accountable for her or his behavior. There are right and wrong ways to exercise facilitative leadership, and there are types of environments that can enhance or hinder its success.

Marks of Genuine Facilitative Leadership

Facilitative leadership includes strategies and attitudes as well. Goldman, Dunlap, and Conley (1993) suggest that principals' facilitative behavior is demonstrated by the following behaviors:

1. creatively overcoming resource constraints of time, funds, and information
2. maximizing human resource synergy by building teams with diverse skills and interpersonal chemistry
3. maintaining sufficient awareness of staff activities to provide feedback, coordination, and conflict management
4. spanning boundaries to create intraschool and community networks that provide recognition
5. practicing collaborative politics that emphasize one-on-one conversation rather than large meetings
6. through these behaviors, modeling and embodying the school's vision

Principals use these tactics to solve student learning problems, create an environment for school restructuring, and build staff instructional and leadership capabilities.

Other scholars have reached similar conclusions. Leithwood (1992)

embeds facilitative power within the concept of transformational leadership. He asserts that administrators must be ready to abandon transactional (control-oriented) and instructional leadership modes and use facilitative power if they are going to attempt fundamental change in their schools. Although consensus has not been reached regarding what elements define transformational leadership, it can be conceptualized as a series of behaviors and practices exhibited by leaders that increase staff commitment to organizational success. Leaders enhance staff commitment by creating greater alignment between individual self-concept and values and organizational vision or mission.

Leithwood and others (1994), based on a modification of a review by Podsakoff and others (1990), offer seven dimensions of transformational leadership:

- Identifying and articulating a vision
- Fostering the acceptance of group goals
- Providing individualized support
- Intellectual stimulation
- Providing an appropriate model
- High performance expectations
- Contingent reward

Principal as Enabler

Prestine (1991) uses the language of principal as "enabler." She found that principals in four schools participating in the Coalition of Essential Schools had significant new demands put upon them in three categories: sharing power, participation without domination, and facilitation. Her case study of one of these schools (Prestine 1994) found three dimensions that "give substance to the critical and reciprocal linkages between the role of the principal and the development of new patterns and understandings" necessary for systemic educational reform:

1. *Advocating Change by Modeling Consistency.* The responsibility for maintaining congruence with and consistency to new understandings rests largely with the principal. In essence, the principal must serve as the repository of the shared values and common imperatives that constitute the new order of understandings and processes....

   Through consistently and continually exhibiting the expectations embodied in the shared beliefs, the principal provides a model, a touchstone for expectations, that sets the pattern of interactions and processes for the whole school. (p. 147)

2. *Noticing Opportunities for Change.* [I]t seems likely that a certain amount of discomfort or stress is necessary for change to occur.... The principal's position at the center of the web of relationships in the school affords the opportunity to notice those things that may serve as catalysts for change.... Unappreciated and certainly underused, the reflective process of noticing things, testing these against the shared beliefs, and then figuring out what should be done appears to be critical. It allows the principal to make opportunistic use of events and happenings, to shape processes, and to address problems. (pp. 147, 148)

3. *Blending Authenticity and Flexibility.* Principals whose personal values, beliefs, and aspirations for their schools are consistent, coherent, and reflected in all they say and do achieve a credibility and authenticity that can inspire trust and confidence. .. Establishment of this authenticity is not based on manipulation of subordinates or even on traditional means of motivation. Rather it must spring from a genuine commitment to align beliefs, actions, and words.

   However,... this authenticity requirement must be counterbalanced with an ability to be comfortable with multiple inconsistencies and ambiguities that call for flexibility. While authenticity suggests a certain firmness of conviction and clarity of understandings, this must be tempered by the realities of uncertainty inherent in participatory shared structures and processes. At both the organizational and the individual levels, clarity of understanding is necessary but without a rigid precision that would stifle the flexibility required. The responsibility for maintaining this delicate balance rests primarily with the principal. (pp. 148-149)

Prestine argues that rather than redefining the principal's role, "it is a new conception, a turning of the role of principal 90 degrees from everywhere." She finds much that is problematic and difficult to understand about this new role conception. The role

> is difficult to discern as it is defined by nuances that are subtle, unarticulated, and embedded in context-specific organizational processes and shared understandings. Understandings of this new role appear to exist, for the most part, as tacit understandings. There is an innate recognition, but this remains largely unarticulated....
>
> Even more seriously, there is no adequate language for examining and discussing that which has largely been unexamined and undiscussed in traditional understandings. If this new role of the principal is not the same thing as it was, how do we think about what it is? If this new role is *not* doing what was done, how do we talk about what this is? (p. 150)

Peterson (1989) and Kleine-Kracht (1993) use the expression "indirect

leadership" to describe principals' efforts to facilitate leadership in teachers as opposed to working directly on tasks or projects. Glickman (1989) describes the principal as "not... the sole instructional leader but rather as the leader of instructional leaders." Schools are places where "teachers are jointly responsible for the supervision of instructional tasks..., staff development, curriculum development, group development, and action research" (p. 6). Facilitative leadership is compatible with, and may be necessary for, sustaining the type of professionalism, moral authority, and community that Sergiovanni believes may ultimately make formal leadership roles redundant and unnecessary (Muncey and McQuillan 1993).

Potential Problems

Facilitative leadership, while a tantalizing concept for students of the principalship and an attractive model for principals, encompasses a set of tensions alluded to, but not yet fully explored, in the literature. Louis and Miles (1990) caution that principals need "to take active initiative without shutting others out—and to support others' initiative without becoming maternal/paternal." Their research suggests that principals using facilitative leadership, especially ones linking those behaviors to the school improvement or restructuring process, must expend considerable energy managing the school's need for a coherent vision and direction, while sustaining staff commitment, creativity, and leadership. The balance is potentially unstable and fragile, especially if projected over the long term.

Similarly, Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers (1992) argue that these changes, and facilitative leadership itself, generate ambiguity because principals and teachers struggle to manage transitions in their mutual role expectations. They suggest that uncertainty creates an initial inward focus on one's own role, and that this retards the evolution of a shared task orientation that characterizes the positive reports about facilitative leadership.

Glickman (1990) notes the potential problems of high expectations and high energy created by facilitative leadership. Excitement and anxiety go together. Facilitative leadership has often been tied to school restructuring, and the simultaneous change in leadership behaviors and organizational structures may open a school to intensified internal and external criticism. The excitement and anxiety that surround such significant changes may exacerbate one another.

Facilitative Leadership and Democratic Leadership

Emerging forms of leadership that are not domination-oriented may not necessarily be democratic leadership. We often think of leadership along

a continuum, from highly controlling to highly democratic. However, reports of facilitative models of leadership in practice tend to describe participation in decision-making that is focused on enhancing teacher efficacy and improving organizational effectiveness, not on the more general goal of creating a community where all decisions are made by the group.

This lack of a fundamental orientation toward democratic decision-making as a desirable end in itself can cause facilitative leadership to become manipulative, or worse. In fact, Blase (1993) is critical of leadership activities directed from the center, implying that they are not facilitative. He suggests that some behaviors identified as "facilitative leadership" actually reflect a control orientation. True involvement in decision-making, argues Blase, is best achieved through informal means and through formal committees and team structures that limit the capacity of the leader to control or manipulate. These critiques suggest that the concept of facilitative leadership is complex, and that its nature and consequences, both positive and negative, have yet to be exhaustively analyzed.

Chapter 2

Background to the Study

Our interest in this evolving conception of leadership stems from our observations that restructuring requires principals and staff members to rethink and reorganize deeply internalized beliefs and habits about teaching and learning, governance, and collaboration and participation. Because it helps the principal and staff manage the interpersonal dynamics, ambiguity, and fragmentation that accompany systemic change, facilitative leadership can make a major contribution to school restructuring.

We have reported upon its potentially positive effects in our own recent writing (Conley 1991; Conley, Dunlap, and Goldman 1992; Dunlap and Goldman 1991; Goldman and others 1993). However, closer examination raises enough issues to suggest that facilitative leadership is neither a quick fix nor a complete answer.

This Bulletin is designed to examine and promote understanding of both the potentialities and contradictions we have observed when facilitative leadership is exercised, and to provide some examples of the types of behaviors that constitute this form of leadership. We frame our observations in the form of ten propositions. The propositions are intended to be primarily descriptive and interpretive, not judgmental.

These propositions are drawn from findings and interpretations originating from three sources: (1) our 1991-1993 studies of nine Oregon schools that were members of the Oregon Network, a federally funded grant designed to enable schools to take the "next step" in school restructuring,* (2) earlier research we conducted with Oregon schools (Conley 1991), and (3) observations of other researchers studying the interaction between leadership and restructuring. We begin with a brief explanation of the Oregon Network and then present the ten propositions.

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The Oregon Network

Some background information on the sites we studied may provide a clearer picture of the environments that served as sources for the primary data from which we derived the ten propositions. All nine sites had a history of school-improvement efforts. None was a highly troubled innercity school, though two were located in central-city neighborhoods. Most have a sizeable population of students from disadvantaged environments.

No sites are in exclusively upper-middle-class suburbs or towns, but several have significant numbers of students from relatively privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. Per-pupil funding at each site is very close to statewide means. Administrators at all these schools—three elementary schools, two middle schools, three high schools, and one K-12 alternative learning center—have been attempting to employ more facilitative forms of leadership to effect school restructuring.

We collected our data through extensive formal interviews, surveys, observations, and documentary data gathered at the nine schools largely between 1991 and 1993 (Merwin 1993, Rusch 1992). Some of the data have been reported in an article describing the relationship between facilitative power and nonstandardized solutions for school restructuring (Goldman and others 1993).

Ten Propositions

We present our findings in the form of ten propositions, general descriptive statements that suggest both how facilitative leadership looks and the issues involved in its use. The chapters that follow contain a brief discussion of each proposition, its meaning, some examples, and possible implications of it. These propositions help identify the strengths and limitations of the concept of facilitative leadership. Furthermore, these propositions help distinguish and describe the interactions among various organizational and system functions that result from altered conceptions of leadership and changed leadership behaviors.

We have grouped the ten propositions under three broad headings—Creating and Managing Meaning, Facilitating the Process, and Operating in an Organizational Context—that are the titles of the next three chapters.

Chapter 3

Creating and Managing Meaning

Schools are complex systems, bounded by day-to-day and year-to-year habits and routines. Teachers become very good at most of what they do, refining and improving instructional and assessment activities, occasionally changing which grade level or which subjects they teach and, more rarely, moving from one classroom or school to the next. Although from time to time most question their own effectiveness and that of the school, few doubt that they are doing a good job and making steady improvements. These views are strongly held and have deep meanings for most teachers. What they expect, or at least hope for, from their leaders is a support structure that will both provide resources and buffer them from the environment—difficult children and difficult parents especially—so they can get on with their jobs.

Facilitative leaders are aware of these beliefs and norms, but they do a great deal more to cause teachers to examine their assumptions and change their practices. They nurture a new set of symbols and meanings, ones that support broader, more collaborative change, risk-taking, and a redefinition of individual and collective goals and assumptions. They create both the illusion and the reality of motion, of positive change that, despite uncertainties, leads to a school that better serves the children who attend it.

Creating new meanings is especially challenging because the new meanings co-exist with the old, honoring the staff as committed professionals who continue contributing to a successful school while building upon and reconfiguring the present structures of curriculum and instruction. The process generates tensions, and even conflicts, which can seldom be hidden and rarely resolved; rather, they become starting points for individual initiative and organizational creativity that can result in new and effective ways of developing and delivering educational programs.

Creatively Using Tension

1. *Facilitative leadership is primarily the creation and management of tensions.*

Tension exists in organizations, and all successful leaders must be able to manage tension. Educators tend to view tension as something to be avoided; schools often pursue congenial staff relations at the expense of surfacing differences and diverse points of view. In such environments, superficial harmony is attained by refraining from articulating organizational goals and mission, by avoiding systematic review of practices, and by avoiding topics or situations that might create conflict.

Schools possessing superficial harmony are often characterized by transactional or control-oriented leadership, where people get what they need through private transactions with the leader. This method can constrain one sort of tension, but creates its own set of sublimated stresses as the faculty splinters into those who have access to resources, or who can transact successfully, and those who have less access to resources and successful transactions.

We do not necessarily equate tension creation with conflict. Tension created by facilitative leaders has been described elsewhere as "dynamic tension," or as the "discrepancy model." This approach seeks to create a gap in perceptions of what is and what can or should be. Furthermore, tension is creatively used to help support change by bringing people together who might not otherwise interact, creating new leaders, infusing information into the system, focusing on vision, encouraging others to take the initiative. The facilitative leader, in fact, looks for opportunities to challenge the status quo and disrupt the equilibrium that characterizes highly bureaucratic organizations. We list this dimension first because of its importance and its overarching nature.

Principals Channel Faculty Energy Toward Common Goals

The principals we studied seemed to accept tension creation and tension management as defining dimensions of their role. Rather than simply reacting to organizational and environmental forces, they anticipated and directed energy in ways that caused staff to engage more in processes that could lead toward improved schooling. Directed tension creation may help create a clear focus on common goals, standards for success, and accountability for performance. These principals did not simply establish a vision for the school and then step back and expect the school to align its efforts to achieve the vision. They powerfully engaged and directed faculty energy, at times creating conflict or bringing it out into the open rather than suppressing

or sublimating it.

One elementary principal used a series of retreats to focus staff discussion on "ten commitments" that she believed were prerequisites to schoolwide change. Tensions emerged. One staff member, in particular, felt he would not be able to meet the new, higher expectations to which the staff was committing. His public articulation of his fears and sense of inadequacy challenged the principal and faculty to deal with the complex interplay between supporting a colleague and improving the school program to meet students' changing needs.

In one school, staff members agreed in principle to change, but they could not agree on any specific program by which to accomplish it. The principal worked to manage the tensions between his "pioneer" teachers, who needed to move forward, and his "settlers," who were comfortable where they were even though they acknowledged that change in the abstract was desirable. This principal attempted to validate the pioneers without segregating them from the rest of the staff, so that their ideas would continue to influence others. They were frustrated, however, that the principal could not or would not move more decisively to persuade the rest of the faculty to act.

The principal tried several approaches designed to increase the settlers' acceptance of the inevitability and desirability of change. As a result of a series of meetings the principal helped organize and support, all faculty agreed that the school would adopt a "research and development" process whereby new ideas and programs could be implemented and evaluated. This strategy enabled the pioneers to continue their efforts, while the settlers had to acknowledge that change would result from these activities. The effect was to create tension that could be managed toward ends the faculty had agreed were desirable.

Restructuring Creates Need for Conflict Managers

Peterson and Warren's School Restructuring Study (1994) included six schools distributed across the United States that had been engaged in broad restructuring for two or more years. Their findings tended to support Blase's (1991) observation that greater decision-making opportunities create a more highly charged political environment, which, in turn, creates more conflict. Administrators must monitor the conflict and facilitate appropriate conflict-management strategies for themselves and others. For example, in one of the schools they studied, the group of lead teachers became a governing coalition that put itself in a position to force their views on their colleagues, which increased the level of conflict.

Peterson and Warren cite additional examples from the other schools: conflict over meeting conveners and agendas, conflict when a principal

vetoed an individual staffing assignment that had arisen directly from the school mission, and conflict over who would make curriculum decisions. Their general observations parallel ours:

> With increased conflict we find principals pulled into the role of mediator and conflict resolver, in part, because many have taken on this role before and, perhaps more important, because there are few formal mechanisms for resolving many of these conflicts and few processes defined in the governance system (Peterson and Warren 1994, p. 233).

Hallinger and Hausman (1994, pp. 170-71) quote a principal who gives a slightly different perspective on how administrators manage the tension that accompanies restructuring:

> [to move ahead is] an almost daily decision that you have to make because you have to serve as both a catalyst and a facilitator, and those are almost contradictory roles. A facilitator is a person who tries to get everybody to move at a pace that people can handle and come to some kind of consensus. At the same time, you like to put a little fire under them and move a little faster.

None of the Oregon Network principals would disagree.

Negotiating a Shared Vision

2. *Successful facilitative leadership encourages shared visions, but there are tensions and tradeoffs that accompany the shift from bureaucracy-driven to vision-driven systems.*

"Vision" has been a much discussed and admired component of school restructuring (Bredeson 1991, Conley and others 1992, Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991). The linkage of a vision-driven organization and facilitative leadership can disrupt both the bureaucratic structures and existing culture of a school. Bureaucratic mechanisms generally provide a sense of order and security, but they also tend to undermine members' belief in their ability to solve their own problems or modify their work environment to make it more effective.

Vision is one tool that helps to create a framework of meaning within which each member of an organization can begin to examine her decisions and behavior. A vision is not an end in itself, but the beginning of a continuous process of meaning-making focusing. Writing vision statements became something of a fad when strategic planning was at its height of popularity. Many schools posted vision statements on the wall, but few other tangible results ensued. The visions we describe here, in contrast, were inextricably bound to other organizational processes and were considered important by faculty.

When schools have strong visions, participants may decide to disregard bureaucratic safeguards to pursue agreed-upon aims, but this creates uncertainty and anxiety for those accustomed to operating within constrained work environments. Often frustration is symptomatic of insecurity among those members of the school who have been most successful playing under the old, known, predictable rules and value system. In six network schools where site councils or school-improvement committees were observed, participants were initially skeptical that their decisions or input would be respected. The actions of the principal helped overcome this skepticism and build confidence in and commitment to teacher-led decision-making and problem-solving.

A Focus on Vision Alters Patterns of Influence

Vision-driven systems allocate opportunities and influence to those able to operationalize the vision. Both the principal and new teacher-led decision-making structures will likely be more sympathetic to staff members who can put ideas into practice. Those who previously had special access to the principal are forced to compete for scarce resources publicly with others who may be more able to adapt their practices to the new vision. This competition and resource shift can induce previously powerful or influential staff members to resist the dismantling of bureaucratic structures and mechanisms.

When decision-making becomes more public, transactional leadership is constrained, and so are those who function best using "squeaky wheel" tactics. Such behaviors are less successful when decisions are made publicly and when critics are expected to demonstrate how their criticism helps the organization achieve its goals. In one network school, where all major budget decisions were made by a committee of teachers and administrators, the principal made the budget available for public review. The adoption process effectively quelled allegations that the principal was using the budget to promote his agenda (or vision) independently.

In facilitative environments, policies and procedures do not necessarily dominate and control behavior, since staff members are freer to be opportunistic and can create and communicate their own sense of meaning to one another. Implementing a vision tends to debureaucratize the school, breaking down the specialized expertise—for instance, in curriculum areas such as science or language arts, or in special education—that serves as a professional anchor for many teachers.

Prestine (1994) describes an Essential School, a junior high, in which faculty wedded the desire to restructure with the desire to better meet special-education students' needs; they created core teams consisting of a teacher from each of the following areas: mathematics, science, language arts, social

studies, and special education. The principal believed that "essential schools are about making connections rather than making fragments. We want a school in which personalization, rather than categorization, is the tool for dealing with individual differences in the curriculum" (Prestine 1994, p. 130). But this freewheeling environment creates substantial disorientation among teachers who want no part of the ambiguity that results. One superintendent described leadership in this situation as analogous to attempting to coax caged birds to fly (Mitchell 1990).

This dilemma has placed a priority on school leaders' capacity for communicating, reinforcing, and legitimating the school vision. Sergiovanni (1992) believes this is a major element of "reinventing leadership." Rosenblum, Louis, and Rossmiller (1994, pp. 106-7) quote a teacher who explains how a new principal created support for change: A committee was "set up so that there is more understanding as to the direction that we are taking, the reason for being here, the goals for us personally as well as for the school. We know what her vision is. We understand just where the school is going."

Principals Let Go of Their Personal Visions

Ironically, sharing decision-making can be most problematic for principals who have developed strong, clear, personal educational visions. Two network principals mentioned the difficulty of "letting go" of, or modifying, their personal vision. It was very difficult for these principals to relinquish deeply held beliefs. When asked how they reconciled their personal vision with the group's ability to define a collective vision, they indicated that they did many things to ensure the vision that emerged was one with which they could live.

Part of the task of facilitative leadership is to negotiate potential conflicts between staff and self in ways that allow continued modeling of the "shared" vision by the leader. In at least one network school, the principal's vision was primarily intuitive, and the staff, not he, articulated a clear, focused vision. Meaning was negotiated and renegotiated more frequently when the principal was not the primary interpreter of the vision.

Capitalizing on Opportunities for Change

3. *Facilitative leadership, together with vision, generates and capitalizes on opportunities, but if not monitored and facilitated systematically, this opportunism can lead to fragmentation and factionalization.*

Vision-driven schools encourage individual innovation; they can also become fragmented and factionalized. Legitimated by the vision, any teacher

can take the initiative to solve problems and develop programs. This can cause schools to adapt more rapidly and to build a culture where change is an accepted value, but it can also lead to rifts between those with strong commitment to the vision and those with lesser levels of attachment to it.

Multiple initiatives, even if consistent with one another and with the school vision, create obligations and expectations that stretch both the collective energies of, and fragile relationships among, staff members. Successful facilitative leaders strive to manage this fragmentation by supporting teachers who are ready and eager to change, while trying to increase commitment and blunt criticism from those who are less enthusiastic about the new vision.

Principals described teachers who took advantage of the opportunities offered by a vision-driven environment as "thoroughbreds," "pioneers," and "early adapters," and tended to give these teachers the leeway they needed. These teachers pushed the vision to its limits and caused it to be redefined or operationalized more quickly.

These teachers' initiative and the administrative support they received, however, also stretched building norms and sometimes created a backlash. The fact that their initiatives were vision-driven and sanctioned by a site committee did not erase the dominant scarcity norm: While teachers may have accepted having little themselves, professional jealously occurred when certain teachers received special resources, opportunities, or recognition. Moreover, some teachers initiated projects requiring collaboration, which threatened the longstanding, powerful norm of teacher isolation as well.

In some schools, effectively functioning groups may move in opposite directions, failing to capitalize on opportunities for collaboration and articulation between teams. One example is evident in Goldman's (1994) research on schools implementing multiage, nongraded classroom structures and developmentally appropriate instructional practice for first- and second-graders. As one principal remarked,

> I think in our effort to keep people involved, we have come up with some systems where we have some teams that work on things and the primary team often really does things on their own. The mixed age class, and all the little bits and how it works came about separate from the whole school, so there are parts of it that function separately. . . . We have a 3-4-5 grade level team also which is working on the reading writing connection and process writing and that sort of thing. They also function somewhat separate from the other [i.e., 1-2] team. And they also have sort of the specialist team; they function quite a bit separately too. . . I think we have some overall goals that are the glue that holds us together, but I think in many cases what happens is done somewhat separately from the whole group.

At least one Oregon Network principal ensured that every teacher had a role in restructuring activities during the year, which helped reduce the

isolation. One significant project devised by this principal was a conference held at the school. At the conference, which attracted several hundred teachers, all staff members were validated for having contributed to the vision, and for being innovative educators. This inclusiveness seemed to generate greater openness among faculty to each others' ideas, and reduce defensiveness toward, or fear of, the accomplishments or ideas of colleagues. The conference helped manage factionalism by promoting involvement and constructive interdependence among all staff members.

Chapter 4

Facilitating the Process

Schools don't know how to change very well or very quickly. Most teachers and principals do not yet understand the dynamics of participatory decision-making and its potentials and limitations. As a process, it is time-consuming and is frequently more frustrating than exhilarating. Participation can and should be guided by facilitative leaders, but it cannot really be controlled without reverting to the top-down structures participative management is designed to replace. Principals can help the school leave the harbor, and they can navigate, but they cannot actually pilot the ship itself. They must find others who can lead the process, and must help them develop the skills they will need to enable the school to complete its voyage successfully.

Sometimes the principal isn't a key part of the process. As facilitative leaders step back from being centrally involved in every decision, they assume new roles. They can sound the alarm when the school loses focus on its vision, or when people get so caught up in process that the process becomes an end rather than a means to an end. They can help others see when there are so many new initiatives that the school loses programmatic coherence or when its resources get stretched too thinly. In short, the facilitative principal creates and sustains conditions within which new leaders can emerge, nurtures staff readiness, and is alert to the types of internal and external contradictions that threaten the change process.

Developing New Leaders

4. *Successful facilitative leadership requires constant development of many new leaders and creation of new leadership structures. However, the creation of new leaders and structures upsets the existing social hierarchy.*

Teacher leadership is a critical component of educational restructuring. There is substantial evidence that teachers must be involved for most changes to succeed. One of the significant developments of the past decade has been

an increase in the legitimacy and frequency of teacher leadership roles. From staff developer to lead teacher to peer coach to site-council chairperson, numerous new opportunities for teacher leadership have come into being. These roles allow teachers to be involved in shaping the goals and culture of the school while retaining their ties to the classroom and the legitimacy associated with such ties.

Principals Recruit Previously Uninvolved Teachers

Principals who had the greatest success employing facilitative leadership to bring about changes at the school level fostered the development of leadership among a wide range of teachers. This leadership often came from people who had never given any indication of being desirous or capable of assuming a prominent leadership role.

In one school, leadership arose around technology, which was central to the school's vision. One teacher with significant knowledge of technology had displayed little interest in or aptitude for leadership. At a goal-setting retreat he established a miniature electronic network that enabled participants to work more effectively in a new, interconnected manner. The teacher's expertise was validated, he personally contributed to the effectiveness of the retreat, and he was subsequently viewed as a resource for reform efforts. He went on to design an electronic presentation that explained the school's restructuring program. This, in turn, endowed him with the role of spokesperson for the school, as he joined with colleagues to make presentations. His commitment to change was strengthened, as was his role as a leader.

Principals also developed new leadership by tapping teachers who had been previously excluded, sometimes because of their status. This might be a younger teacher, a veteran teacher who had quietly withdrawn in reaction to unsupportive colleagues, someone only recently arrived at the school, or, in high schools, women who had not been previously included in "the conversation." In her study of three network schools, Rusch (1992) concluded that "participatory practices in schools disrupt[ed] traditional hierarchies of power and influence and create[d] new tensions among staff members" (p. v). Muncey and McQuillan (1993) noted a similar phenomenon in their study of the Coalition of Essential Schools.

There was a profusion of new governance structures and ad hoc committees at these schools, some of which were cumbersome, confusing, and ineffectual. However, the new structures and committees had two significant consequences: (1) They allowed many more teachers to develop leadership skills, and (2) they provided some alternatives to long-time governance structures without engaging in the costly political battles that often accompany the outright dismantling of an existing structure.

Facilitative Leaders Beget Other Facilitative Leaders

Facilitative leadership by principals seemed to produce facilitative behaviors by teacher leaders (*see also* Goldman and others 1993). Teachers who took advantage of new leadership opportunities tended to involve others rather than hoard personal power. There was less fear of being excluded from important decisions, or of needing to guard one's resources. The collegiality that occurred when many teachers interacted regularly and took leadership roles both reduced fears and presented many more forums for concerns to be raised. New leadership roles and structures were tools to solve problems, not merely maintain the status quo.

The extent to which these changes test principals' commitment to new ways of exercising leadership and power cannot be overstated. At one level, the emergence of new leaders begins to redesign the school's traditional hierarchy. One of Rosenblum and colleagues' (1994, p. 110) informants explains the emerging style as follows: "Our principal selects key people, empowers them, and invests them with resources and support."

But there's a reverse side to the process as well. Christensen (1992, p. 24) notes that "it's easy to set up a process, to delegate, but giving up control is hard." Murphy (1994, pp. 25-30) summarizes several empirical studies of restructuring schools that reiterate this point, but Prestine (1994, p. 134) provides perhaps the best illustrative example. She describes a situation in which a school's leadership team attempted to renew the school community's commitment to authentic assessment, only to discover that "the principal, with the endorsement and blessing of the faculty, had been assuming the responsibility for their learning." According to the principal, "the model I set up was exactly the kind of instruction I had never done as a teacher—that is, I give you an assignment and you do exactly as I told you to do" (Prestine 1994, p. 134).

Spanning Boundaries to Secure Support for the School

5. *In facilitative environments, principals span internal and external boundaries by nurturing communication and information exchange, and by identifying and exploiting opportunities. As more leaders emerge, however, they may also be spanning boundaries independently and simultaneously.*

Schools are rarely able to deal with the challenges posed by their ever more needy student populations without the support of those outside the school. Schools cannot function as closed systems, oblivious to the larger environment. Parent involvement and coalitions with community agencies, in particular, are critical. Relationships with other educational organizations and businesses can be equally valuable. Schools are challenged to learn how to

communicate across traditional boundaries, to take the initiative to reach out to those outside the school. Such behavior is unheard of in some schools, where systematic attempts have been made to keep the outside world at "arm's length."

As power devolves within a facilitative environment, decision-making and information flow become more complex. More people make more decisions and take more initiative. Principals link internal groups, keeping them informed of progress, checking on the overall climate in the building, supporting new ideas, floating trial balloons, and working informally to develop consensus. These activities are especially critical in preparing staff to make decisions that require a strong faculty majority.

Principals Seek Not Power, But Resources

Facilitative principals span external boundaries as well, securing resources for the school, initiating contacts, legitimizing the school's change efforts with the community, sensing opposition and potentially controversial areas, and identifying opportunities.

Oregon Network principals were not necessarily overtly political in that they did not focus on accumulating personal political power either among their fellow administrators or within the community's power structure. They worked more to procure "raw materials" for the school in the form of money, equipment, human resources, opportunities, and ideas. It was typical to hear one of these principals say, "We have a great opportunity to..." in describing a recent contact. The principals made certain they had some opportunities to be "out and about," making contacts, meeting with people, and exploring possibilities. When principals were successful in spanning boundaries, creating opportunities, and securing resources, few complaints were voiced regarding their occasional absences from their school site.

Teachers, Too, Become Entrepreneurs

The principal's entrepreneurial efforts may be adopted by staff members, as they, too, become more openly entrepreneurial and attempt to secure resources or develop programs that span organizational boundaries. Schools with facilitative environments seem especially able to exploit the educational (and occasionally financial) benefits of partnerships. This sometimes leads to situations in which the principal does not always know everything that is going on, every contact that is being initiated, or the status of every program within the building. In the network schools principals seemed to be comfortable with this ambiguity.

Of course, the potential always exists for those in this expanded pool

of leaders to overstep their authority and make unauthorized commitments. In one case, a well-meaning parent made arrangements with a local business to host a fundraising event designed to help support the school's reform program. The principal received a call from an executive in the company who was disturbed that the school had not followed proper procedures in requesting the use of facilities.

In another example, a teacher who had become accustomed to solving problems through her own initiative invited a local professor to serve as a consultant to a district-level task force. Several hours after her initial contact with the professor, she called him back to put the invitation on hold because it had occurred to her that she did not have the authority to obligate district money.

Creating Readiness for Change

6. *Facilitative leaders understand the importance of creating readiness for change. Principals continue to play a pivotal role in deciding when to act, since total readiness is never achieved.*

Readiness for change is an often overlooked dimension of school improvement and restructuring. It may be considered a stage through which everyone passes, never to return. Tools for gauging faculty attitude toward a particular innovation, like the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, may inadvertently create the impression that readiness for change is accomplished when everyone has passed through the *awareness*, *informational*, and perhaps *personal* stages of concern. While the developers of CBAM did not intend for such an interpretation to be made, it may occur nonetheless.

Individuals Must Conclude a Change Is Necessary

In reality, readiness tends to be a fluid rather than a fixed variable. Individuals possess varying degrees of readiness based on a complex set of factors, including their recent experiences with or perceptions of any particular proposed changes, and their sense of their peers' and reference group's attitude toward the change.

Readiness based on a transactional relationship is particularly subject to such shifts, since the individual has been conditioned to scan the environment to determine which behaviors can be negotiated. True readiness for change is much more difficult to achieve because it emanates from an individual reaching the conclusion that a particular change is necessary and valuable. Furthermore, the individual must understand the rationale for the change both in terms of the organization's needs and personal impact.

Far too many improvement and restructuring projects are built upon false consensus and superficial readiness. Many of those agreeing to the program, method, or structure under consideration are not cognizant of the psychological framework that underlies the rationale for the change and may lack an awareness of the personal sacrifice necessary to make the new approach succeed. There is considerable evidence nationally of this occurring at various schools engaged in restructuring (Berends and King 1994, Muncey and McQuillan 1993, Prager 1992).

Principals often have to keep the school moving when momentum or energy flags. As once principal noted, "Much of the reason we weren't getting anywhere with the assessment issue had to do with complacency. We were real smug about having made the changes in the schedule, the structural changes that gave us a lot of positive feedback. So we were becoming increasingly unwilling to take risks" (Prestine 1994, p. 132).

Principals Build Readiness Through Variety of Strategies

One consistent theme that emerged while studying the Oregon Network principals was their role in creating readiness for change in their buildings. They listened carefully and observed frequently so they could regularly assess the staff's willingness to change and determine how to motivate staff to build the psychological framework necessary for large-scale personal change.

Most of the principals we observed used a variety of formal and informal strategies to build readiness. Professional conferences and visits to other school sites served as important tools to expose more teachers to new ideas. Generally teams would consist of a carefully selected blend of true believers, fence-sitters, and skeptics. These teams were frequently charged with synthesizing the information they were receiving and planning how they would report to the faculty on their findings. They took seriously their job of identifying and analyzing best practices, since they believed their recommendations would be carefully reviewed and could eventually be implemented by their colleagues. This also enhanced group solidarity and allowed them to appreciate one another's point of view.

Some principals also read voraciously; others did not appear to do so. In nearly every case, however, they valued articles, books, and other sources of relevant written material, whether discovered by them or brought to their attention by staff. They either copied the best of the materials or alerted staff to their availability. Principals found ways to create discussion and share ideas among the faculty to enhance the sense of intellectual ferment and to challenge staff members who held more static world views.

These principals used data to help make decision-making more inclu-

sive. One high school had a well-developed set of data that was very easy to read and contained information to which the staff could refer as they considered what improvements were needed next. With these kinds of materials at hand, it became both easier and more logical to turn decision-making over to teachers. Significantly, teachers in this school came to expect, and when necessary to demand, data to aid them in making decisions. Staff expected new programs to collect data to determine effectiveness and to make midcourse adjustments.

Attention to readiness did not necessarily eliminate conflict once it was time to act. Facilitative principals were still called upon to move the change agenda forward when further readiness activities were unlikely to yield results. Knowing when continued pursuit of readiness would be only marginally useful was more an artistic than a scientific decision for these principals. They could not always articulate how they knew when to encourage action. When pressed, they said they followed their instincts. It should also be noted that their instincts were not infallible.

Balancing Process and Product

7. *Successful facilitative leaders balance process and product, activity and action. An excessive emphasis on process as an end in itself can become dangerously addictive.*

Educational organizations are noted for the amount of process in which they engage on almost every issue. Part of the need to engage in process flows from the role of schools as public agencies that embody community values. As such, most actions reflect value positions. A company may decide to close a factory because it is losing money; when a school is to be closed, it is necessary to conduct meetings, gather data, consider and revise plans, and in the end perhaps even abandon the proposed closure. Many in the private sector are driven to distraction by this seeming fascination with "process." They ask, Why can't schools simply make decisions and move on?

As the goals for education continue to be redefined, and as educational practices and structures are then subjected to closer scrutiny, more and more processes are utilized. There are several reasons for this. As the educational level of the general population and of teachers increases, more people expect to be involved in decisions that affect them. Furthermore, there has been a general decrease in the acceptance of authority and the infallibility of leaders over the past forty years.

Many decisions that might have been made by key administrators in the 1950s, such as organizational goals, are now in the public domain. The

advent of strategic planning in school districts over the past decade is only one example of a complex, time-consuming process that involves many people in the decision-making process. Most school-improvement programs utilize extensive, complex processes requiring many people's involvement and participation, and numerous steps are required before a decision is reached.

Leaders Avoid Making Process an End in Itself

Although this emphasis on process appears to be essential, there is the danger that it will become addictive. Some administrators come to see processes as ends in themselves. A frequently heard expression indicates this attitude: "The process was more important than the product." While this statement is certainly justified in many situations, there is a danger in moving from process to process, with everyone feeling good about their participation and nothing happening as a result. Facilitative leaders employ process constructively, aware of the dangers of process as an end in itself.

Principals in network schools understood the value of process. All utilized retreats, ad hoc task forces or committees, early release days, and other mechanisms to involve all faculty in discussion, dialogue, analysis, and planning. Most used outside consultants as well. Consultants made presentations, reviewed plans, resolved conflicts, recommended new structures, gathered data, facilitated group goal-setting, and taught others to do these tasks.

Teachers in these schools commented on the value of these processes, of having the time to talk with one another, to get the "big picture," to think, dream, analyze, design. Many came to enjoy the spirited interchange that often accompanied such activities. These processes were valuable "products" in and of themselves; they helped establish an environment within which it was possible to initiate substantive change.

Almost all the principals we studied were skilled in moving beyond process to product. They established the importance of results as well as activity. The net effect was to raise the level of concern and interest surrounding most "processes," such as planning or goal-setting. This gave any process they employed meaning and value, since participants were convinced something would result from it. Everyone wanted to be involved and to contribute.

The schools developed mechanisms to communicate about and examine their vision and goals regularly. Most had some form of retreat, either on- or off-site, once or twice a year, combined with opportunities throughout the year for extended discussion among staff. These sessions allowed for the creation, clarification, and recalibration of shared meaning. There was an

almost palpable sense of expectation that accompanied retreats, work groups, study committees, and other settings charged with making recommendations. Those involved took their work seriously. The principal helped established these norms and expectations, and followed through by implementing decisions or recommendations that resulted.

Use of Consensus Varies

The schools we studied all employed some form of consensus in their decision-making. However, both the forms and the underlying definition of consensus varied greatly from site to site. The more effective principals were able to shift the purpose of consensus from reaction to action. Consensus was employed primarily to affirm decisions and agreements already negotiated through a variety of mechanisms, yet in a few schools the consensus requirement served primarily as a blocking mechanism.

In several of the network schools consensus had symbolic as well as political import, serving as the means by which faculty affirmed decisions already reached in committees or informal interactions. This need for extensive informal involvement and ongoing modification of major change proposals resulted in slow movement initially, but once an agreement was affirmed through consensus, the school was able to move ahead relatively quickly. Agreement was more likely to be permanent than perfunctory.

At times, however, the commitment to consensus led to inaction or worse. In at least one school, the principal felt it was manipulative to lobby informally or negotiate before decisions were made by the faculty as a whole. A group of teachers realized the principal's stance enabled them to block any proposal by simply refusing to participate prior to the final decision. Therefore, they did not engage in informal negotiations or modifications of major proposals. There were no mechanisms to force their involvement or to require them to take responsibility for their actions. They simply waited for the call to consensus, then refused to agree.

The principal recognized the problem and started over. First, he obtained agreement on a new definition of consensus and established new rules to govern the consensus process. Next, he made sure all staff members were surveyed and interviewed by teacher leaders before important decisions were made. He helped teachers organize "key communicator" networks, through which supporters and opponents could talk to one another informally before confronting one another in public. Although the principal remained somewhat aloof, these communication efforts benefited from the institutional legitimacy the principal's support gave them, and the revised decision-making process changed the dynamic between those who were centrally involved in change and those who were not.

Deciding When To 'Reinvent the Wheel'

8. *It may be valuable to "reinvent the wheel" when the process creates ownership of an idea, yet it is also energy intensive. Facilitative leaders make careful choices regarding how the limited energy available is expended.*

As noted above, the educators we studied attended many regional and national meetings and read extensively. They frequently brought back ideas or concepts that allowed (or caused) the faculty to create their own meaning or program. However, there was only a finite amount of time and energy available for staff to adapt ideas or develop programs. Principals had to have a sense of when it was appropriate to adopt or adapt someone else's ideas as opposed to developing programs or structures from scratch.

In one elementary school, the principal organized a two-day session during which teachers and community members were to develop outcome statements in literacy and numeracy. These statements were to serve as frameworks by which the staff could come to understand outcome-based education. Participants examined and even used outcomes already developed by other districts and states, but synthesized and reconceptualized them in a unique fashion.

These activities occurred at the same time the state department of education was attempting to define statewide outcomes. Many schools had decided to wait and simply adopt the state's final product. This principal, however, felt that her staff would comprehend outcomes much more completely, take ownership of them, and transform their teaching to a much greater degree if they first developed their own statements, then compared them to the state's product. The two days devoted to developing outcomes were not much more than other districts would have to allocate to explaining the state's outcomes to their staff members, but the ownership and understanding that resulted at this school would enable staff to understand and adapt state outcomes relatively easily.

Such positive results alert us to a dilemma. Facilitative leaders help the staff decide when they should reinvent the wheel and when they should take advantage of existing ideas, packages, curricula, and so forth. When do the leader's decisions reflect those of the group, and when do they clarify conflicting priorities? Network principals made relatively few mistakes identifying school-site-development projects. This success helped staff maintain a willingness to explore and adapt new ideas and programs.

Chapter 5

Operating in an Organizational Context

No school or school leader operates independently of the broader administrative and governance systems that always influence school life. Federal and state policies and regulations coupled with district policies and oversight set contexts and limits for facilitative leadership. These forces are generally relatively constraining, as state and district policy-makers tend to prefer centralization and standardization over creative local solutions that break away from existing policies and rules.

It is easier for states and districts to make school sites more accountable for improved student performance than it is to give schools the latitude to redesign schooling so that the goal is actualized. Creativity, especially when it results in demonstrated successes, can lead to recognition, which can trigger professional jealousies. Teachers and administrators at schools that are improving and being recognized can easily come to feel isolated within their own school districts. They need to be connected to others who are in similar situations. Moreover, principals who exercise facilitative leadership also help their staffs negotiate this complex and dangerous organizational context; their experience in boundary-spanning becomes a precious resource for leadership development.

Finally, there are expectations, especially for the principalship, that are difficult to break down. Teachers, parents, central-office administrators, and fellow principals inside the district expect the principal to be the primary point of contact between the school and the world. This is often an important part of how they and others define the job and it is a source of identity for many principals. Facilitative leadership, by broadening the leadership function, challenges these assumptions about school management and trespasses some long standing comfort zones.

Resolving Issues of Accountability and Responsibility

9. *Unresolved questions concerning accountability continue to surround facilitative leadership as a method for making decisions and solving problems for which parents, school boards, and community members expect someone to be responsible.*

The principals in our studies had not resolved accountability issues in any systematic manner. This should be of concern to those considering facilitative leadership and the emerging role of the facilitative principal. In these schools, policies, goals, and procedures are being decided by faculty members or committees, but principals retain responsibility for their implementation. This potential conflict of authority and responsibility has so far not been problematic. There appear to be several possible reasons for this.

Principals Support Faculty Decisions

First, all the decisions faculty members have made are ones the principals have been able to support. No principal was put in the position of being asked to do something he or she felt was fundamentally bad for children or for the school. One principal was implementing a discipline and tardy system he believed treated only symptoms, not causes. Nevertheless, he felt obligated to implement it, since it resulted from one of the faculty's first applications of a new consensus process. He planned to collect data on the effectiveness of this system, compare it to the previous system, and share this information with faculty when appropriate. In this way he hoped to change their attitudes over time.

Second, no decision involved a radical departure from existing practice, and all schools were showing improvement (or no decline) on traditional measures of success. One high school decided to move to four ninety-minute periods a day and to require all students to demonstrate mastery of certain core skills before being allowed to move to the next level of the program. An elementary school reorganized into "tribes" of one hundred students and four teachers grades 1 to 5. While potentially controversial, such adaptations were comprehensible to the community and consistent with less dramatic changes the school had initiated previously. Dropout rates were stable or declining at all high schools; one school had the highest standardized achievement test scores in the state; and several others won state and national awards and recognition.

Principal's Role Is Subject to Conflicting Expectations

Third, these districts held principals accountable almost exclusively

for managing schools, not for improving education or achieving goals. Since all the principals except one were highly effective managers, they were able to proceed with little interference or accountability. This is not likely to be the case in other states such as Oregon, which is requiring much more detailed and public reporting of school goals, student performance, attendance and dropout data, and other indicators of educational productivity and effectiveness.

Fourth, the school community still expects the principal to be visible, not just as a figurehead but as the central activist. Although principals may envision new dimensions of their role, the local public does not. A principal interviewed by Hallinger and Hausman laments the misperception of roles among members of his school's site committee: "While I'm probably a little clearer in my role as a principal or building administrator, I don't think the parent members or teacher members are at all clear what their responsibilities are. . . . That should not be occurring 5 years after the inception" (1994, p. 164). Hallinger and Hausman studied a small relatively well-endowed district in a suburb of New York and report that this problem gets reinforced when there is teacher and parent turnover on the school council: "So what happens is all the eyes will be in the center of the table; the [parents'] side will flow constantly to the principal" (1994, p. 167).

As educational accountability demands increase, so will the pressure on the principal to assume responsibility for school performance. This will have interesting implications for facilitative leaders. It is worth adding parenthetically that there is little evidence to suggest that highly directive leaders will be any more successful than facilitative leaders in achieving the level of improvement that will be necessary to satisfy the public in many communities. Facilitative leadership may offer the best hope; however, issues of accountability must be addressed in ways they have not been to date.

Seeking the Support of Like-Minded Colleagues

10. *Facilitative leadership is still the exception in many school districts. Facilitative leaders need support to sustain their efforts and counteract isolation.*

Facilitative Leaders Cope with Isolation from Other District Administrators

The focus of the propositions up to this point has been on the behavior of principals in the context of their school building. However, one of the most consistent frustrations these principals had was their feeling of isolation both as facilitative leaders and as change agents within their school district.

Many indicated they did not feel supported by the central administration and fellow principals and could point to evidence that their efforts were being undermined at times.

All the network schools exist in a broader organizational context. They are vulnerable at transition points if the district administration does not understand or value this type of leadership. One school had four principals in four years. The staff had to adapt to several principals who did not necessarily understand or value facilitative leadership. This constant readjustment was made even more difficult for teachers because they were not involved in the selection process.

This particular school had great difficulty sustaining a common vision over time. Staff members had gained recognition and attention because of a set of structural changes (an innovative schedule and the grouping of students into learning teams) they had made several years before. Each successive new principal wanted to roll back one or more of these structures as a way of putting his "mark" on the school. These principal behaviors may have been designed to demonstrate who was in charge and to send a message to teachers accustomed to being involved in making decisions and solving problems. They indicated the central administration's apparent lack of understanding or appreciation for the fragility of facilitative leadership.

This problem is national in scope, not just typical of Oregon schools. Glickman, Allen, and Lunsford (1994, pp. 215-16) researched building-district relationships in the League of Professional Schools, a statewide network in Georgia. They learned that many

> principals work in local districts in which school boards and state policy hold the principal legally responsible for what occurs in his or her school; this has not changed. In most cases the districts and boards have supported their principals' involving faculty in shared governance, but they have not changed board policies to make the governing group responsible for the school. As a result these principals have had to consciously distribute their legal power and become an equal vote among many, although the superintendent, the school board, and the outside community will hold the principal chiefly, if not solely, responsible for the successes or failures of the school.

Fellow Principals May View Facilitative Leaders with Suspicion

This lack of organizational support highlights one of the contradictions of decentralized decision-making. While central administration works tentatively to devolve authority, some schools move very rapidly to enable staff to take control of their professional environment and usher in its transformation. Just as pioneering staff members may be perceived as threats by their peers, some facilitative principals may be viewed with suspicion by their fellow

administrators.

Schools that are able to move toward distinctive responses and adaptations develop what we have referred to elsewhere as *nonstandardized solutions* (Goldman and others 1993). Such solutions result in each school beginning to look different from others. While districts may in theory adopt the rhetoric of decentralized decision-making, central administrators still may find it difficult to accept schools that look different and to embrace change models that involve teachers and community members in significant ways. This should not be surprising since such approaches threaten the traditional role of central administrators.

Network principals frequently found themselves caught between two worlds. They were expected to bring about change and improvement but were viewed with suspicion by their supervisors or peers when they "gave away" too much authority or power to staff. It should be noted that there were fellow administrators in each district who supported these facilitative principals; sometimes it was even the superintendent. However the organizational culture as a whole did not necessarily support their efforts, which made it more difficult for these principals to feel part of the school district or to share their successes and frustrations openly.

Facilitative Leaders Draw Support from One Another

These principals repeatedly mentioned the value of the support network that a group of like-minded colleagues provided them. They brought teams of teachers, parents, and support staff to network retreats. They sought out each other socially and professionally. It was not unusual for high school staff members to visit an elementary school in another district where they would learn about a specific strategy, such as portfolio assessment. Elementary principals felt comfortable interacting with middle school and high school principals. Their common link was their belief that staff members should be involved in and have ownership of decisions that affected their capacity to teach effectively.

Chapter 6

Distinguishing Features of Facilitative Leadership

What distinguishes the Oregon Network schools from other neighboring schools? This chapter highlights three features that characterized schools with facilitative leaders. Perhaps the key characteristic is a heightened sense that all staff members in the school are both able and obligated to take control of their professional lives and work environment, that they can and must make a difference in their school. The significance of this attitude has been noted elsewhere (Rosenholtz 1991). In addition, these schools hold to a distinctive conception of power and view shared decision-making not as an end in itself but as a means to improved performance.

An Expectation of Improvement Replaces Cynicism and Frustration

When facilitative leadership is successful, most members of the organization seem to hold a different psychological perspective regarding their responsibility to participate in solutions and their capacity to solve problems. Teachers, classified staff, and even parents and students expect to identify problems, suggest solutions, and take the responsibility for improving the conditions and products of their school. This occurs not as much through political transactions as through negotiated shared meaning and values that provide a framework for individual and collective action. Principals mediate this process so that all the participants feel capable of creating the conditions necessary for improved individual and collective performance.

This world view contrasts sharply with the view that predominates in schools in which staff and community alike are cynical and frustrated, where they look upon leaders primarily as scapegoats or objects of blame or derision,

and where the solution to any problem is always beyond their reach or ability to influence. Unfortunately, this portrayal seems to describe far too many schools.

This profound sense of inability to affect one's work environment may result from a combination of several mitigating factors, including highly directive or political styles of leadership; rigid bureaucratic structures; diffuse accountability for performance; and contradictory educational policies that isolate and fragment teaching and learning, thereby creating dependence on the formal leader.

Ways To Make the Transition to Facilitative Leadership

Not everyone is, has been, or can be a facilitative leader. Many administrators have been quite effective using other leadership styles. Changing one's leadership style should be undertaken only after careful consideration and a clear sense of what is involved, what will be lost, what will be gained, how much personal change is required. For those committed to such a transformation (or evolution), the following suggestions can help ease the transition:

- *Begin with a thorough assessment of your current leadership style.* Determine how you are perceived now by gathering data in the form of faculty members' perceptions of your leadership style.
- *Assess the culture of your school.* What are the dominant norms, beliefs, values, interaction patterns? How willing are faculty members to participate in decision-making? How skeptical will they be of such a change?
- *Announce your intentions to change.* Do not make people guess what is going on, why you seem different. This transition can be difficult, particularly for those who have well-developed transactional relationships with you.
- *Pick specific, concrete ways in which you can begin to demonstrate more facilitative behaviors.* Issues of importance to teachers are a logical starting point. Symbolic behavior comes later. At first, substantive change signals a new environment in which the energies and contributions of all are more egalitarian.
- *Ensure the first examples of facilitative leadership are ones you can live with.* Nothing would be worse than to invite increased participation in decision-making and then reject the first fruits of such efforts.
- *Gauge the degree of congruence between your personal vision of education and that held by the faculty.* If the faculty lacks a vision, consider whether it would be feasible to create organizational alignment around a vision. Some challenges are more than you may want to take on. A move to a new site may be the perfect time to begin practicing a new leadership style.
- *Look for allies within your district and cultivate a support network outside of it.* Are there other administrators who are attempting to employ a similar style? Are there places where you can exchange ideas and experiences with like-minded colleagues?

Power Is Shared, Not Granted

We have avoided use of the term *empower* in this chapter because we understand the concept to mean someone granting power to someone else. This is not the message we have sought to communicate. Instead, we have described environments where power and leadership are shared, where participants would tend to reject the notion of empowerment as inadequate and excessively narrow as a description of their relationship to power and influence in the school.

This distinction is subtle and may be difficult to grasp for many who are striving to involve more people in decision-making. It is an important one, we believe, since it goes to the heart of one's conception of

power. Hallinger and others (1991) and Bredeson (1991) both observed the difficulty principals experienced as they viewed role change. Specifically, principals were worried about losing control, giving up power.

The notion of "giving up" power, which is implied by empowerment, may be very threatening to those who view power as an entity they are being compelled to transfer. In fact, incremental shifts of power may be more difficult for many administrators to accept than a new conception of their relationship to power. Facilitative notions of leadership require a "letting go" of the illusion of control, and an increasing belief that others can and will function independently and successfully within a common framework of expectations and accountability.

Empowerment often focuses on the negotiation of formal roles, structures, and procedures. While such issues must be addressed in any organization, a primary concern with governance, not improvement, may result in an emphasis on working conditions of adults rather than student performance and teacher efficacy. Formal structures exist to constrain abuses of power, and to the degree that such constraint is needed within an organization, they serve a useful purpose. However, the creation of these structures does not in itself necessarily add to an organization's capacity to modify and improve its practices.

The Goal Is Not Democracy, but Improvement

Facilitative leadership does not seem to have as its primary purpose the enhancement of workplace democracy as an end in itself. Its focus in practice is on improved performance of the work group and enhanced learning by students.

This focus on improvement rather than governance appears to be one of the defining elements of this type of leadership. There is less concern with developing and refining governance structures than with moving the organization forward, enhancing adaptability, solving problems, improving results. Issues of power are processed through the lens of organizational effectiveness and student needs. Broad-based participation is achieved through a variety of strategies, one of which may be formal democratic structures.

Is facilitative leadership the answer to all school-based problems? Can this style of leadership be practiced by everyone? Is it realistic to expect all schools to function in this manner? The answer to these questions is probably no.

There are times in the life of some organizations when highly directive leadership may be both necessary and desirable, at least for a period. It is also likely that many principals will be unable to radically reshape beliefs and behaviors developed over the course of a career. Some communities may

not be capable of exercising shared leadership without abusing the rights of the minority and the disenfranchised. Some principals may confuse facilitative leadership with laissez-faire leadership.

There continue to be many unresolved questions and potential problems associated with the concept and practice of facilitative leadership. At the same time, there is evidence that truly exceptional things can happen in environments where facilitative leadership is exercised. And many more schools and leaders may be challenged to perform exceptionally during the period of rapid adaptation in which public education is currently engaged. We believe facilitative leadership contributes to the capacity of schools to meet this challenge.

Facilitating the Process

Schools don't know how to change very well or very quickly. Most teachers and principals do not yet understand the dynamics of participatory decision-making and its potentials and limitations. As a process, it is time-consuming and is frequently more frustrating than exhilarating. Participation can and should be guided by facilitative leaders, but it cannot really be controlled without reverting to the top-down structures participative management is designed to replace. Principals can help the school leave the harbor, and they can navigate, but they cannot actually pilot the ship itself. They must find others who can lead the process, and must help them develop the skills they will need to enable the school to complete its voyage successfully.

Sometimes the principal isn't a key part of the process. As facilitative leaders step back from being centrally involved in every decision, they assume new roles. They can sound the alarm when the school loses focus on its vision, or when people get so caught up in process that the process becomes an end rather than a means to an end. They can help others see when there are so many new initiatives that the school loses programmatic coherence or when its resources get stretched too thinly. In short, the facilitative principal creates and sustain conditions where new leaders can emerge, nurtures staff readiness, and is alert to the types of internal and external contradictions that threaten the change process.

Operating in an Organizational Context

No school and no school leader operates independently of the broader administrative and governance systems that always influence school life. Federal and state policies and regulations coupled with district policies and oversight set contexts and limits for facilitative leadership. These forces are generally relatively constraining, as state and district policy makers tend to

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